

## Just One More

*From a sermon by R. A. Torrey:*

I never think of our responsibility for being soul winners without thinking of an incident that occurred many years ago in Evanston, Illinois. There Northwestern University is located. Years ago, before it had attained to the dignity of a university, two strong, husky farmer boys came to the college to study—Ed and Will Spencer. Ed was a famous swimmer. Early one morning word came to the college that north of Evanston, between Evanston and Winnetka, there was a wreck a little way off the shore of Lake Michigan. Ed, with the other students and people of the town, hurried northward along the shore toward the wreck. As he ran along a low bluff, he saw a man clinging to the wreckage trying to make the shore. He threw off his superfluous garments, sprang into the lake and swam out, caught hold of the man and the wreckage and made toward shore. He was struck in the head by wreckage, and the blood from the wound filled his eyes so he could not see, but he succeeded in bringing the man to shore.

Going on a little further, he saw another man clinging to wreckage trying to make the shore. This time he took the precaution to tie a rope around his waist and throw the end to the fellow-students on the shore, and sprang into the lake and swam out, grasped the drowning man, gave the signal, and was pulled ashore. Again and again he sprang into the lake and swam out to rescue some who were drowning, until he had succeeded in bringing a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth and a tenth safe to shore.

By now he was completely exhausted. His companions had made a fire of logs upon the shore, for the morning was cold and raw. He walked over to the fire, so weak that he could hardly stand and stood trying to get a little warmth into his shivering body.

After standing there a few moments he turned, looked out over the lake again and saw another man trying to make the shore. He cried to his companions, "Boys, I am going in again." "No, no, Ed," they cried, "Your strength is all gone. You cannot save him. You will only be throwing your own life away. It will be suicide." "I will try, anyway," he cried.

Again he sprang into the lake and swam out and grasped a drowning man and was pulled to shore. And again and again and again and again, until he had brought an eleventh, a twelfth, a thirteenth, a fourteenth and a fifteenth safe to shore.

Then his strength seemed entirely gone. He tottered across the beach to the fire and stood beside it so pale and haggard and emaciated that it seemed as if the hand of death was already upon him. After standing by the fire a few moments he turned and looked out over the lake. In the distance he saw a spar drifting toward a point. To drift around meant certain death. Looking again and seeing a man's head above the spar, he cried, "There is a man trying to save his life!" He looked again and saw a woman's head beside the man's. "Boys," he cried, "there is a man trying to save his wife. I'll help him." "No, no!" they cried; "your strength is all gone. It will be suicide. You cannot help him." "I'll try," he cried.

He sprang again into Lake Michigan and swam out to the spar. Summoning all his fast-dying strength, he put his hands upon it and brought it around the right side of the point to safety. Then they pulled him in through the breakers; tender hands lifted him from the shore, carried him to his room in the college, and laid him upon his bed apparently unconscious. A fire was built in the grate, and his brother sat in front of the grate to watch developments.

He had been sitting there awhile, looking into the fire and thinking of his brother's bravery, when suddenly he heard a footfall behind him and felt a touch upon his

shoulder. Looking up, he saw his brother looking down wistfully into his eyes. "Will," he said, "did I do my best?"

"Why, Ed," Will replied, "you saved seventeen."

He said, "I know it; I know it; but I was afraid I did not do my very best. Will, do you think that I did my very best?"

His brother took him back to bed. During the night he tossed in a semi-delirium. His thought was not about the seventeen whom he had saved, but on the many who went down that day to an early grave. For in spite of his bravery and that of others, many perished that day.

His brother Will, as he sat by the bed, held his hand and tried to calm him. He said, "Ed, you saved seventeen."

"I know it; I know it," he cried, "but, oh, if I could only have saved just one more!"

We all stand beside a stormy sea today—the sea of life. There are wrecks everywhere. Young men, young women, older men, older women are going down, not to a watery grave but to a hopeless eternity. They are going down all over America. They are going down all over England. They are going down in China and Japan and India. Oh, let us jump in again and again and again and rescue the perishing! And when at last every ounce of strength is gone and we sink utterly exhausted on the shore, let us cry in the earnestness of our desire to save the perishing, "Oh, if I could only have saved just one more!" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>R.A. Torrey, "Why Every Christian Should Make Soul Winning His Life's Business," ], Hudson, Curtis, ed. *Great Preaching on Soul Winning*, (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1989), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Billy Graham, *Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), p. 94-95.